



ANNFIELD PLAIN

Urban District Council.

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MEDICAL OFFICER'S
ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1898.

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Stanley, February 14th, 1899.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present you with my report for the year 1898, giving the sickness from Zymotic Diseases, Vital Statistics, and some account of work done in the Inspector's Department. The number of notifiable diseases reported to me during the year amounted to 113, made up as follows, viz:—Scarlatina, 86; Enteric Fever, 14; Puerperal Fever, 2; and Erysipelas, 11. The non-notifiable infectious diseases consisted of 10 cases of Whooping Cough, and about 120 of Measles; but as the latter became epidemic in the last outbreak, there were probably many more cases than those brought to my notice.

ZYMOTIC DISEASES.

SCARLATINA.—In the month of January there was one case of Scarlatina—the last of an outbreak of 1897. The district was free until May, when it appeared simultaneously, and by importation into Catchgate and East Pontop, and from those two sources cases continuously occurred until the end of the year. Its greatest incidence was in August and the three following months.

ENTERIC FEVER.—The prevalence of Enteric or Typhoid Fever is said to depend greatly upon the Sanitary condition of the district; probably this holds good if the disease becomes epidemic, or continues to reappear at intervals, where it is impossible that the milk and water supply can be the agents. Although the number of cases

exceeded the previous year, still there was nothing special in the surroundings likely to cause any individual outbreak. Of the fourteen cases notified, one occurred in March, and the remainder between July and November. The villages affected were Dipton, Hill Top, South Medomsley, Catchgate, Annfield Plain, South Pontop and Greencroft. Careful enquiry failed to trace the origin of any excepting one, who undoubtedly caught the disease by a dip into the sewerage tank, and those who were infected by direct contact. The latter happened in three instances accounting for four cases.

PUERPERAL FEVER.—The cases were probably not specific in character.

ERYSIPelas.—So far as the infectiveness of this disease is concerned all the cases might have been eliminated from the notifiable list.

DIARRHOEA was prevalent in the hot dry weather, and helped considerably to swell the death returns, chiefly under the name of Gastro-Enteritis. Diarrhoea is classed among the infectious diseases, but its method of propagation is not very clear.

MEASLES.—In the month of July, Measles was introduced on four different occasions, but each time it was successfully isolated. In the beginning of November it crossed from the adjoining district and became very prevalent almost at once. The epidemic however practically ceased the following month.

WHOOPING COUGH.—New comers were responsible for the few cases of Whooping Cough brought under my notice.

The Joint Hospital Board, consisting of representatives from the various Urban and Rural District Councils included in the Lanchester Union, intend having an Hospital for Infectious Diseases constructed as soon as possible. The new Hospital will make a third in the Union and is intended especially to provide accommodation for the Annfield Plain, Stanley, and Tanfield Urban Districts. After some difficulty a fairly central site has been secured. Admission to the present Hospital was tendered to all removal cases, but only four patients accepted the offer. An Isolation Hospital may be very useful in helping to arrest an epidemic; but its real usefulness is that it affords the means of

giving complete isolation to the initial case of an outbreak of infectious disease, and thus preventing the outbreak extending to the proportions of an epidemic. As a practical illustration in three out of the four cases removed to the Hospital the outbreak ended, although in each house there were several members, young and old, and the locality was also a populous one.

There are no trades nor manufactories really prejudicial to health; the chief industry is coal-mining, and although the coal is soft and dusty the disease called "Miners' Asthma" is practically unknown.

It is too soon to express an opinion upon the new Vaccination Act, but seeing that the "conscientious objectors" have not been numerous, coupled with the fact that the operation is performed at their houses with calf-lymph, guaranteed by the Government to be pure, a greater number may possibly accept the services of the Public Vaccinator, and do away, in a great measure, with private vaccination invariably imperfectly done.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The number of births registered during the year amounted to 475, giving a birth-rate of 35.7; and the number of deaths, including those occurring in the Workhouse, were 202, giving a death-rate of 15.2 per 1,000, estimating the population at 13,300. The deaths from all forms of infectious diseases were as follows, viz:—Scarlatina, 1; Enteric Fever, 4; Puerperal Fever, 2; Diarrhoea, 6; Measles, 2; and Whooping Cough, 2. Total, 17; being about 8.4 per cent of the whole deaths. The mortality from Scarlatina and Measles was uncommonly small. Infantile mortality was rather within the County average, 72 deaths—being a third of the whole—occurred under the age of one year, and by adding 30 between the age of one and five years, exactly half of the deaths were under the age of five years. Infectious diseases made practically little difference in the infantile death-rate, only ten cases succumbed to the various forms, and half of these were due to the prevalency of Diarrhoea as before stated.

INSPECTOR'S DEPARTMENT.

The number of new houses built during the year was 71—of these 17 were constructed for double tenants, giving a total of 88 tenements.

This should give an increase of population over 500, according to the usual average per house. All the houses were built in conformity with the bye-laws.

OLD PREMISES.—No less than 195 old houses were dealt with, consisting of repairs, structural alterations, and the removal of various nuisances ; and another 21 were made habitable, and one closed under the Working Classes' Act.

OUT-OFFICES.—New outoffices have been built wherever necessary, and several have undergone improvement ; but there still remains a number of objectional open privy-middens.

SEWERS.—A new sewer was laid to Flint Hill and connected with the Dilton outlet. It is intended to replace the open channels at Dilton Woodhouses and South Medomsley by suitable sewers, practically completing the whole district.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL.—The present outfall works are those at Kyo and Dilton ; the sewage is heated in the former by chemical precipitation and filtration, but either the works are too small or the process is imperfect ; at any rate the effluent is occasionally offensive. The latter consist merely of ordinary settling tanks ; of the minor outlets only that at South Medomsley will need some prepared treatment, the others flow into adjoining fields and become absorbed. The question of sewage purification is an important one and should have your Council's consideration at once.

REMOVAL OF REFUSE has not been very satisfactorily done, but on and after March 1st, 1899, the work will be carried out effectually by contract, and under the control of your Inspector.

COWSHEDS AND DAIRIES have come under [the Registration Act, and their systematic inspection will be attended to.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES have been well kept and no charge of offensiveness brought against them.

THE LICENSED LODGING-HOUSES were fairly satisfactory.

THE WATER SUPPLY was plentiful and good, and in course of time the water is likely to be laid into each house, doing away with the outside stand pipes.

OVERCROWDING.

A kind of overcrowding, owing to the great demand for workmen's houses, has become a serious matter, and one not easily dealt with. There are several single tenements, and also houses with one room ; but if the cubic space allotted to each occupant meets the law's requirements, proceedings would be valueless. Where the state of things has been pointed out to the owners no satisfactory reply was returned ; perhaps a little publicity might be beneficial. Overcrowding is an important factor in tuberculous disease,—the most universal of all diseases—the microbe will not only live a long time, but will also propagate itself in a confined atmosphere of human breath, whereas sunlight and fresh air are almost sudden death to it.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Yonr Obedient Servant,

T. BENSON,

Medical Officer.

*The Urban District Council,
Annfield Plain.*

(A)

TABLE of DEATHS during the year 1898, in
the Annfield Plain Urban District, Classified according
to Diseases, Ages, and Localities.

MORTALITY FROM ALL CAUSES, AT SUBJOINED AGES.							
		At all Ages.		Under 1 year.		1 and under 5.	
202		72	30	12		5 and under 15.	
				10	46	15 and under 25.	
						25 and under 65.	
						65 and upwards.	
Deaths occurring outside the district among persons belonging thereto.							
					2		3

MORTALITY FROM SUBJOINED CAUSES, DISTINGUISHING DEATHS OF CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE.

AGES.	Scarlatina.	FEVERS.							
		Enteric or Typhoid.	Phthisis.	Measles.	Whooping Cough.	Diarrhoea and Dysentery.	Rheumatic Fever.	Phthisis.	Bronchitis, Pneumonia and Pleurisy.
Under 5		1	...	2	2	5	1	1	14
5 upwards.	I	3	2	...	...	1	1	16	10

(B)

TABLE of POPULATION, BIRTHS, and of
NEW CASES of INFECTIOUS SICKNESS,
coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of
Health, during the year 1898.

POPULATION AT ALL AGES.		Registered Births.	Aged under 5 or over 5.	NEW CASES OF SICKNESS IN EACH LOCALITY, COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.			
Last Census.	Estimated to middle of 1898.			Scarlatina.	Enteric or Typhoid.	Puerperal.	Erysipelas.
			Under 5	46	1	...	...
9837	13300	475	5 upwards	40	13	2	11

NUMBER OF SUCH CASES REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES IN THE SEVERAL
LOCALITIES FOR TREATMENT IN ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

	Under 5
	5 upwards	3	1

AREA AND POPULATION OF THE DISTRICT OR DIVISION TO WHICH
THIS RETURN RELATES.

Area in Acres	...	...	...	...	3475
Population (last Census)	...	...	...	...	9837
Population (estimated to middle of 1898)	...	...	...	...	13300

DEATH RATES—

General	...	15.2 per 1000 population, estimated to middle of 1898.
Infant (under one year of age)	...	151.6 per 1000 Births Registered.

T. BENSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

February 14th, 1899.